

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: North Carolina	
COUNTY: Craven	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Benjamin Smith House

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
210 Hancock Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
New Bern (First Congressional District, The Hon. Walter B. Jones)

STATE North Carolina	CODE 37	COUNTY: Craven	CODE 049
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
W. F. Ward

STREET AND NUMBER:  
P. O. Box 1428

CITY OR TOWN:  
New Bern

STATE: North Carolina	CODE 37
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Craven County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
New Bern

STATE: North Carolina	CODE 37
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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
New Bern

STATE: North Carolina	CODE 37
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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Benjamin Smith House is one of many variations of the brick side-hall-plan house that was so popular in New Bern in the early nineteenth century. This house, which abuts the sidewalk, rises to a height of two-and-a-half stories above a full basement. The structure is built of brick laid in Flemish bond and on the street (west) facade has two water tables--one about four courses above ground level, and the other expressing the division of the first floor and the basement. The gable roof is pierced on the front and rear by two gable dormers and terminates on the front with a finely carved wooden cornice of undercut modillions above a Wall of Troy band; the cornice returns slightly into the gable ends.

Fenestration on side-hall plan houses usually varies with each elevation, but the Benjamin Smith House varies more than is customary. The street facade is three bays wide with a central entrance at the basement level; the south side also is three bays, but the openings are asymmetrically placed, with an entrance in the middle bay of the first level. Two smaller windows occur in the gable. All the windows on the front facade and the south side contain six-over-six sash and are surmounted by flat arches of rubbed and gauged brick. The north side seems to have been altered, for each ascending level contains a decreasing number of openings, beginning with four at the first level and ending with two at the attic level. All these windows contain four-over-four sash except those in the attic which contain six-over-six. The placement of arches over windows on this north side seems to be completely arbitrary. Two bays of the rear facade are obscured by a two-story frame addition, a mid-twentieth century replacement for an earlier one-story addition.

The major entrance, that in the south side, is approached by a long run of sandstone steps and is protected by a one-bay porch with an open pediment supported on plain colonnettes. This porch, although a mid-twentieth century replacement for a long double-tier porch, is more than likely very similar in character to the original. The entrance contains a three-light transom below which is a six-panel door set in a matching paneled reveal and soffit. The moldings of the stiles and rails around the flat panels appear to be somewhat newer than other elements of the house, and therefore probably not original. A six-panel door leading into the basement, typical of those found in other late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century houses in New Bern, appears in the central bay of the main facade. The door is flush-paneled on the bottom and flat-paneled above. Tiny strips of molding have been applied around the fields of the flat panels, which have concave corners. Framing the door is an open pediment supported on fluted engaged Tuscan columns. This element was removed from the J. A. Jones House on Broad Street before it was destroyed. The Jones House was remodeled in the early decades of the twentieth century, and this pedimented entrance dates from that era.

The basement does not follow the side-hall plan of the floors above, but instead is partitioned into two large rooms. The room in the rear contains an extremely tall mantel, native to Virginia, which was installed within the last twenty years. It has a square opening flanked by pilasters of which the lower halves are stop-fluted and the remainder fluted. Pierced work appears in the cap areas which are worked in a vernacular manner. Paneled end blocks and a center tablet adorned with a circular relief sunburst compose

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7. A

the tall frieze, and the heavily molded cornice shelf breaks above all three elements.

The first floor follows the traditional side-hall arrangement, two rooms deep. In comparison with the other New Bern side-hall plan houses, however, the Benjamin Smith House is extremely plain and unorthodox in its interior finish. Unlike its associates, the house has no transverse arch in the hall, which might be accounted for by the location of the main entrance--at the side of the hall, rather than at the front. Another curious difference is the mantel in the front parlor. This element is decidedly Georgian and very much in contrast to the mantels of Federal design which are found throughout the rest of the house.

Although the hall lacks the transverse arch and the flat-paneled wainscot found in other New Bern examples of this type, it does have a molded chair rail and a stair of traditional Federal design. The stair, which rises in two flights with a transverse landing between, features a tapered newel and posts and balusters square in section. These carry a ramped rounded handrail. A wave-pattern bracket appears on the end of each step.

The treatment of the Georgian mantel in the front parlor is quite similar to those found in the Smith-Whitford, Coor-Gaston, and John Wright Stanly houses, and in Bellaire, although it lacks the accompanying overmantel found in the major rooms of those houses. Surrounding the square fire opening is a richly molded crossetted architrave. Above the architrave, the frieze is interrupted at either end by consoles which support a molded shelf enhanced by a Wall of Troy band. A molded chair rail, baseboard, and plaster cornice complete the finish of the room.

In the rear parlor, the chair rail and baseboard are repeated, but the mantel follows simple Adamesque lines. The square fire opening is flanked by paneled pilasters with plain caps which support an unadorned frieze and end blocks. The cornice shelf breaks above the end blocks and is augmented by a course of sculptured dentils.

The present plan of the second floor varies from that of the first in that the front room carries across all three bays of the front wall--incorporating space normally allotted to the hall. Both rooms have plaster walls with molded chair rails and baseboards. Of the two mantels, that in the front room is more elaborate, having fluted pilasters which flank the fire opening and pierced gouge work in the pilaster caps and across the architrave. A molded shelf breaks above the plain frieze and end blocks and is adorned only with a course of dentils, to each of which has been applied a tiny strip of astragal molding. The mantel in the rear room is a simplified version of this one. Many of the doors in the Benjamin Smith House have six flat panels and bear some of their early hardware.

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7. B

The unusual combination of Georgian and Federal appointments throughout the house has caused much speculation about the original appearance of the interior. Yet there is no test that can be applied to the elements that would indicate their originality. At the present time it seems most accurate to consider the earliest stylistic elements as merely a holdover from that earlier period.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military    | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

The origins of the Benjamin Smith House are somewhat obscure both because of the dearth of knowledge concerning Benjamin Smith, its first recorded owner, and because of the absence of records concerning the house before 1802. In that year Benjamin and his wife, Sarah Dry Smith, sold the house to Charles Bates. That transfer listed improvements as already "standing," which indicates that the house had already been built.

Stylistically the house certainly predates 1802, bearing design and plan similarities to the Isaac Taylor House on Craven Street, which was built about 1790. Both houses have side-hall plans, both are brick, both two-and-a-half stories, and there are some similarities in interior detail as well. The chief differences occur because the Smith House was obviously intended to face the river as an end house with unobstructed views, while the Taylor House was flanked by other buildings.

Benjamin Smith and his wife possessed the financial means to build such a house. Though little is known about Smith, his wife, Sarah Dry, was the daughter of William Dry, a wealthy planter and land owner who before 1800 engaged in real estate speculation. He laid out the town of Dryborough, adjacent to New Bern in an area now partially covered by the present Cedar Grove Cemetery, and actively sold lots there. The fact that the purchasers of lots in Dryborough included almost all of the first families of New Bern might be accounted for by Dry's standing as a member of that group, but his ability as an entrepreneur and the desirability of the land also played a part. Smith, had he possessed no wealth himself, would still have had access to considerable means, through his wife's family, and he is probably responsible for the construction of the house.

Charles Bates, who bought the house from the Smiths in 1802, was in New Bern at least as early as 1800 when he appeared on the membership rolls of St. John's Masonic Lodge. In 1803 Bates bought Lot 22 as well. The purchase of this lot between the lot where the Hancock Street house stands and the Trent River insured that no structure would be built between the house and the river, thus maintaining an open view for the residents. After Bates's death in the house and lots were sold by his executors to James McKinlay in 1815. McKinlay sold almost immediately to Thomas Daves and the 1816 Tax List shows "Thomas H. Daves, lots 22, 72, with a brick dwelling."

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Stephen F. Miller in his "Recollections of New Bern Fifty Years Ago" (1874) indicated that Daves was a half-brother of James McKinlay; thus the McKinlay-Daves sale in 1815 was probably an in-family transfer of the property. Miller also indicated that Daves was popular and had been sheriff of Craven County, "just for the sake of mixing with the people and doing them acts of kindness. His fortune was sufficient to enable him to do without office of any kind." Daves was evidently a planter and a gentleman farmer, for Miller related that in one experiment he had deposited "125 loads of fertilizing materials on a single acre of land . . . which he planted in corn. The crop was truly luxuriant, and refreshing to behold. Nothing like it had been seen in that part of the country." Daves was married twice, first to the daughter of James W. Bryan, and later to the daughter of General Durand Hatch.

By 1826 Daves was evidently in financial difficulties, for the courts ordered a sale of his lands to pay debts, and on February 9, 1826, the house was purchased at public sale by John G. Kinsey. Kinsey operated a store on Craven Street between Pollock and Front streets, and had also married a daughter of James Bryan. Evidently he moved to the Hancock Street house for after his death in 1831 the land was listed as "the same whereon the said John G. Kinsey lately resided. . . ." In that deed Kinsey's children sold the house to their grandfather, James W. Bryan. Bryan moved to the house, but sold it in 1834, after which the house had several owners, some of them relatives of Bryan. In 1859 title passed to Eliza Betts, whose family held the property for many years.

On June 7, 1858, the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad was opened from Morehead City to Goldsboro, over tracks which ran in front of the Smith House down Hancock Street. This track caused that street to be known for most of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as Railroad Avenue. The railroad bridge over the Trent River was in full view of the house, and part of the right-of-way passed over lot 22, the waterfront lot that had been a part of the property since 1803.

The presence of the railroad and bridge as well as the elevated position of the house made it an important military site during the Civil War. Union troops occupied New Bern in March, 1862, and held the town until the end of the war. With the subsequent occupation of Fort Macon and nearby coastal towns, the railroad became a vital link between Union forces at New Bern and the railroad termini at Morehead City and Beaufort. The Trent River bridge was one of the most important crossings of the railroad, and the Smith House offered both a strong structure for housing troops and a good lookout point. It was occupied continuously during the war, and W. P. Metts remembered after the war that even before the arrival of the Union forces, the Confederates had established a kitchen in the basement and fed their troops guarding the bridge from that kitchen. That use was continued by the Union forces, and the Smith House was the first house seen at close range by all troops entering or leaving New Bern across the Trent River Bridge.

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8. B

In 1895 Maude Moore Latham bought the property from the Metts heirs. (It was Mrs. Latham who later provided much of the impetus and most of the money for the reconstruction of the Tryon Palace complex.) Mrs. Latham sold the house to W. F. Hill, from whom its present owner, W. F. Ward, purchased it during World War II.

The Benjamin Smith House is an interesting early version of the brick side-hall plan town house which dominated early nineteenth century New Bern. Except for the basement, the interiors, which contain a puzzling combination of fine Georgian and Federal trim, are essentially intact. In addition the house, because of its strategic position, played a significant role in the Civil War occupation of the town.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Carraway, Gertrude S. Years of Light. New Bern: Owen G. Dunn, 1944.  
 Craven County Records, Craven County Courthouse, New Bern, North Carolina, Office of the Register of Deeds. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).  
 Craven County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills).  
 Interview, W. F. Ward, Sr., October, 1971, by Tony Wrenn; notes in (Survey) files of State Department of Archives and History.  
 Miller, Stephen F., "Recollections of New Bern Fifty Years Ago," Our Living and Our Dead. New Bern, 1874.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	35°	06'	11"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	77°	02'	31"
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"			
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:  $\frac{1}{4}$  Acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
 Survey and Planning Unit Staff, John B. Wells, Supervisor

ORGANIZATION: State Department of Archives and History      DATE: 28 December 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh      STATE: North Carolina      CODE: 37

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name H. G. Jones

Title Director, State Department of Archives and History

Date 28 December 1971

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

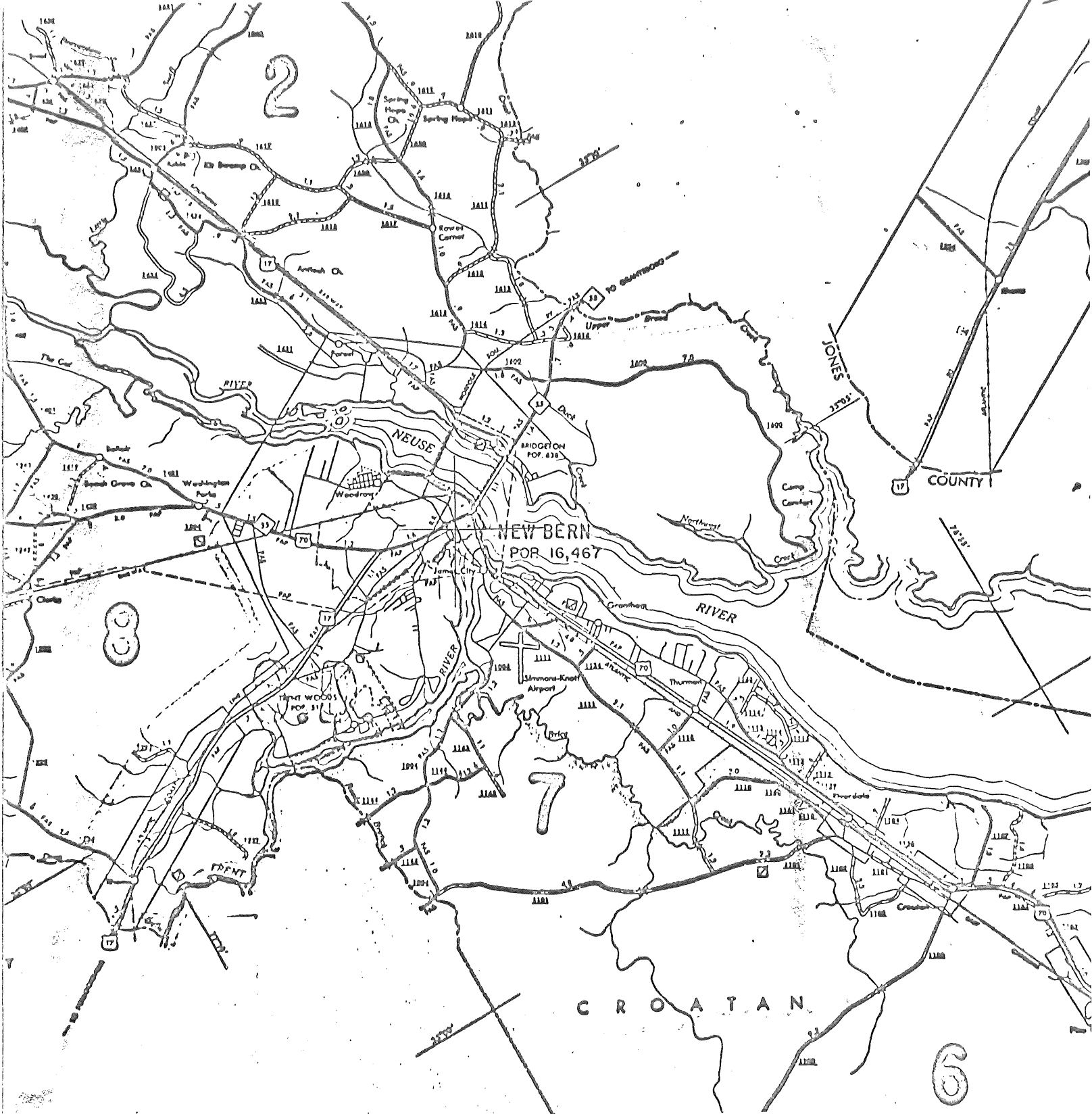
Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

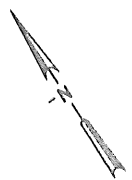
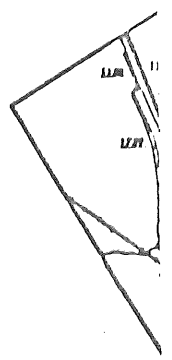


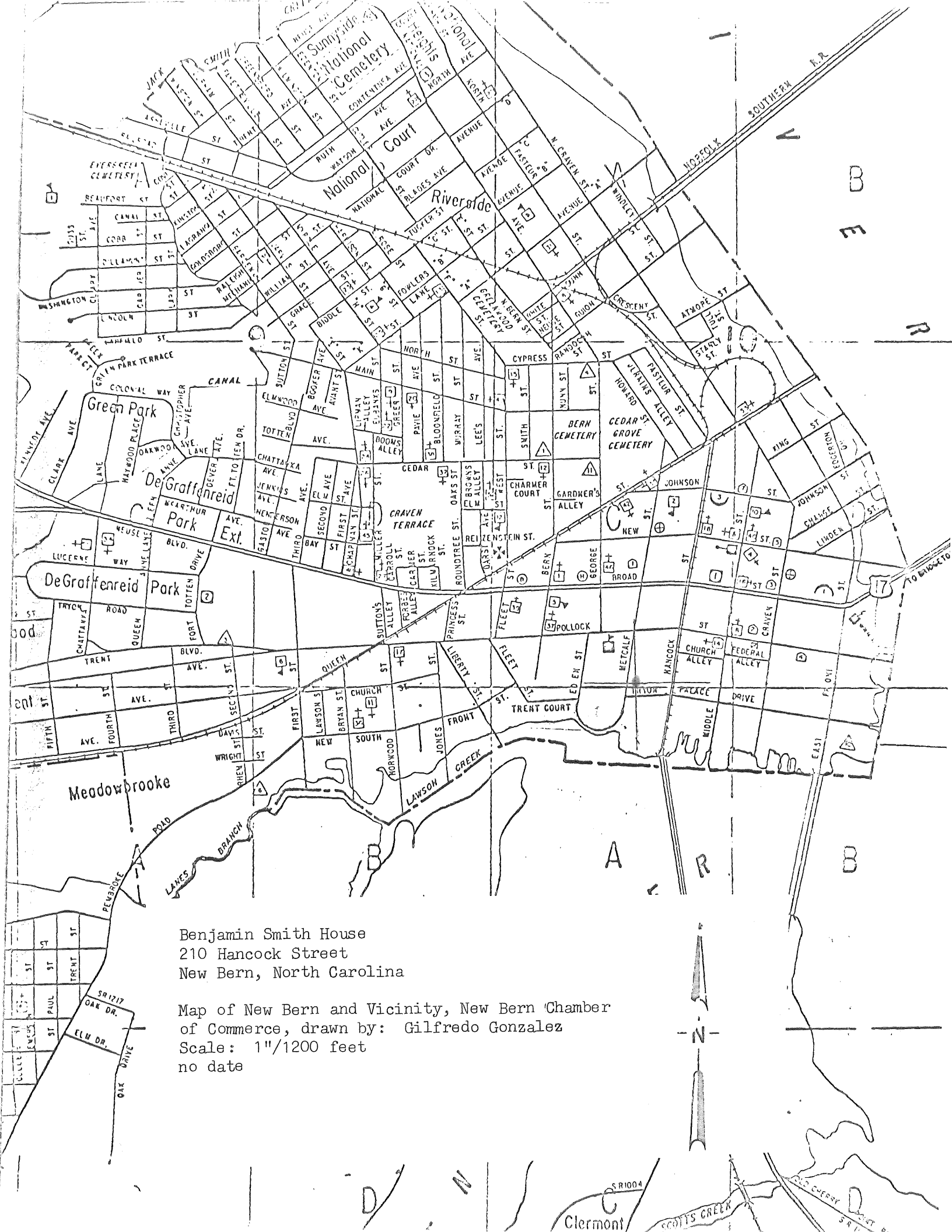


Benjamin Smith House  
 210 Hancock Street  
 New Bern, North Carolina

Map of Craven County, New Bern Chamber of Commerce  
 Scale: 3/8" : 1 mile  
 no date

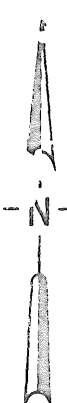
Latitude	Longitude
degrees minutes seconds	degrees minutes seconds
35° 06' 11"	77° 02' 31"





Benjamin Smith House  
210 Hancock Street  
New Bern, North Carolina

Map of New Bern and Vicinity, New Bern Chamber  
of Commerce, drawn by: Gilfredo Gonzalez  
Scale: 1"/1200 feet  
no date



Clermont  
S R1004  
COTTONS CREEK  
OLD CHERRY